

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 OC-06 CCO-00 NEA-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00

CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 FAA-00 L-03 SP-03 SS-20 CIEP-02 OMB-01 NSC-07

NSCE-00 DRC-01 PRS-01 USIE-00 PM-07 /097 W

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O P 021545Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8578

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL LAHORE NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 4125

BANGKOK FOR BRDCO PASS 200 COURIER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AF, PK, ETRN, PFOR

SUBJ: AFGHAN NATIONAL AIRLINE SUSPENDS SERVICE TO AND FROM PAKISTAN

1. PANAM REPRESENTATIVE ON BOARD AND VICE PRESIDENT OF ARIANA, THE AFGHAN NATIONAL AIRLINE, HAS INFORMED US THAT ABOUT ONE WEEK AGO THE PAKISTANI CIVIL AIR AUTHORITY NOTIFIED ARIANA THAT IT COULD EFFECTIVE JULY 1 CARRY ONLY 40 PASSENGERS PER MONTH TO AND FROM PAKISTAN. ACCORDING TO PANAM REP THE AIR AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IMPOSES NO LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS EITHER ARIANA OR PIA MAY CARRY. IN RECENT MONTHS, PIA HAS FLOWN FOUR FLIGHTS WEEKLY TO AND FROM KABUL AND PAKISTAN, AND ARIANA HAS FLOWN THREE FLIGHTS TO PAKISTAN AND FOUR FROM PAKISTAN TO KABUL EACH WEEK.

2. PANAM REP BELIEVES THAT REASON FOR PAK ACTION TO RESTRICT ARIANA'S PASSENGER LOADS IS PIA CONCERN THAT ARIANA IS CARRYING HEAVY LOADS ON LAHORE-LONDON ROUTE VIA KABUL AND IN THE PROCESS
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IS HURTING PIA'S LONDON BUSINESS. HEAD OF AFGHAN AIR AUTHORITY

TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO PROTESTED TO PAK CHARGE IN KABUL ABOUT NEWSPAPER ARTICLES IN PAK PRESS CRITICIZING ARIANA.

3. AFGHAN AIR AUTHORITY RESPONDED TO PAK REQUEST WITH A LETTER REFUSING TO COMPLY AND POINTING OUT THAT PAK ACTION WOULD BE IN VIOLATION OF CIVIL AIR AGREEMENT. AS OF JULY 2, NO PAK RESPONSE HAD BEEN RECEIVED, AND ON JULY 1 ARIANA FLEW REGULAR FLIGHT TO NEW DELHI VIA LAHORE CARRYING NORMAL PASSENGER LOAD.

4. ON JULY 2, PAK AUTHORITIES IN LAHORE REFUSED PERMIT ARIANA FLIGHT SCHEDULED DEPART LAHORE FOR KABUL TO CARRY ANY PASSENGERS, DESPITE FACT THAT SOME 70 PASSENGERS HAD BEEN TICKETED AND WERE PREPARING TO BOARD. AS A RESULT OF THIS INCIDENT, AFGHANS HAVE DECIDED TO SUSPEND ALL ARIANA FLIGHTS TO AND FROM PAKISTAN AND PLAN SEND A LETTER TO PAK AIR AUTHORITY STATING THAT PAK ATTEMPT TO RESTRICT ARIANA PASSENGERS TO 40 PER MONTH IS TANTAMOUNT TO A REQUEST TO CANCEL ARIANA'S PAKISTANI SERVICE AND THAT IF PAKS DO NOT WITHDRAW THIS DEMAND, PIA SHOULD CEASE ALL SERVICE TO AND FROM KABUL EFFECTIVE JULY 15.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH MOTIVATION FOR PAKISTANI ACTION AGAINST ARIANA APPEARS TO BE COMMERCIAL, THIS IS THE KIND OF INCIDENT THAT COULD BLOW UP INTO A MAJOR POLITICAL STORM. GIVEN THIS FACT AND PANAM'S 49 PERCENT OWNERSHIP OF ARIANA, I SUGGEST THAT EITHER EMBASSY ISLAMABAD OR CONGEN LAHORE INQUIRE OF PAK AUTHORITIES AS TO BACKGROUND THEIR ACTION AND SUGGEST THAT THEY DO WHAT THEY CAN TO RESOLVE THIS MATTER SPEEDILY. IF IT TURNS OUT THAT THE AFGHANS ARE IN ANY WAY TO BLAME FOR THIS PROBLEM, I WOULD BE HAPPY TO MAKE SIMILAR REPRESENTATIONS HERE.
ELIOT

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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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